



AgBrief

Maryland Agriculture

A Quick Look at Maryland Agriculture
Updated: November 2015



Maryland Agriculture at a Glance

Statistics below from USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service, USDA Economic Research Service & *MDA, except where noted.

Number of Farms in Maryland — 12,300
Average Farm Size — 165 acres
Land in farms — 2,030,000 acres
Number of certified organic farms — 110
Number of organic acres certified by MDA - 7,542
Average age of a Maryland farmer — 59 years old
Full time farmers (principal operators) — 5,996
Market Value of Ag Products — \$2.42 billion

Maryland's Top Commodity Sectors

1. Poultry (Broilers) — Maryland is the 9th largest state in the nation in broiler and meat-type chicken production, raising 288 million broilers in 2014. Broilers accounted for \$990 million or 41 percent of total farm cash receipts.

2. Greenhouse and Nursery — The horticultural sector accounted for 251.2 million or 10.4 percent of total farm cash receipts in 2014. According to the *MD Horticulture Industry 2012 Statistical Profile and Economic Summary*, there were 29,980 acres dedicated to nursery production, with most acreage in the Central and Eastern Shore regions.

3. Corn — Corn accounted for \$281.6 million or 11.7 percent of total farm cash receipts in 2014. Corn is planted on about 500,000 acres each year, and most of it is harvested for grain and used as chicken feed on the Eastern Shore.

4. Milk and Dairy — The dairy sector accounted for \$243 million or 10 percent of total farm cash receipts in 2014. There were 50,000 dairy cows in Maryland that produced an average of 19,740 pounds of milk per cow for total production of 987 million pounds of milk. Frederick, Washington and Carol counties produce most of the state's milk.



Maryland's Equine Industry

Statistics from USDA's Maryland Equine Census

Maryland has more horses per square mile than any other state and a rich heritage in horsemanship. The equine industry includes 79,100 equine animals at 16,040 locations with total assets valued at \$5.6 billion. Equine operations account for 587,000 acres of which 88,000 acres are enrolled in land preservation programs.

Farmers & Farmers Market Nutrition Program

Maryland has at least one farmers' market in every county and Baltimore city, and some 143 markets across the state. About 400 farmers participate in [USDA's Farmers Market Nutrition Program](#) which provides fresh fruit and vegetables for at-risk populations and, last year, benefited 34,975 women, infants and children, and 7,047 seniors.

Preserving Valuable Farmland

The Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF), the nation's oldest and most successful farmland preservation program, purchases easements and restricts development on prime agricultural land and woodland. **MALPF currently has purchased easements on 2,187 properties, permanently preserving 296,682 acres of farmland, for \$662.4 million.**



MDA Nutrient Management Program

Farmers grossing at least \$2,500 a year and livestock producers with more than 8,000 pounds of live animal weight must follow nutrient management plans. **By the end of FY 2015, over 99 percent of the state's 5,332 regulated farm operators had submitted nutrient management plans.** MDA is pursuing enforcement actions against 25 operators who have not submitted their initial nutrient management plans. In FY 2015, MDA issued \$5,600 in fines against 16 farmers who failed to file an initial nutrient management plan.

Cover Crops and Bay Restoration

Farmers plant cover crops -- which are cold-hardy small grains like wheat, rye and barley -- after the fall harvest to help control soil erosion and reduce nutrients washing into the bay. **During the 2014-2015 planting season, MACS provided farmers with \$24 million in grants to plant 427,458 acres of cover crops statewide.** The planting enabled agriculture to exceed its Chesapeake Bay milestone commitment for this practice and marked the sixth consecutive year that Maryland farmers have planted more than 400,000 acres of protective cover crops annually.

Farmers Help the Bay

Since 1984, the Maryland Agricultural Water Quality Cost-Share (MACS) Program has provided farmers with grants to cover up to 87.5 percent of the cost of installing conservation measures known as best management practices (BMPs) to prevent soil erosion, manage nutrients and safeguard water quality in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Since the program started, farmers have installed 23,417 water quality projects. **In FY 2015, MACS provided Maryland farmers with \$5.4 million in grants to install 360 conservation projects on their farms that control soil erosion, reduce nutrient runoff and protect water quality in streams, rivers and the Chesapeake Bay.** These grants helped Maryland farmers meet or exceed the majority of the third set of two-year Bay restoration milestones.

Turf Grass, Home Owners and Fertilizer

Maryland has about 1.1 million acres of turf grass -- most of it in single family residences. That represents 18 percent of the state's total land area and more than any single agricultural crop. **Non-farm fertilizer accounted for 53 percent of all fertilizer sold/distributed in Maryland in FY 2014.**

The Maryland Department of Agriculture

The department was formally founded as a unit in the executive branch of state government in 1973. It currently consists of three major offices:

- **The Office of Marketing, Animal Industries and Consumer Services**, which includes Animal Health, Food Quality Assurance, Maryland Horse Industry Board, State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners, Weights and Measures, the Maryland Agricultural Fair Board, and agricultural marketing.
- **The Office of Plant Industries and Pest Management**, which includes Plant Protection and Weed Management, Turf and Seed, Pesticide Regulation, State Chemist, Mosquito Control and Forest Pest Management.
- **The Office of Resource Conservation**, which includes the nutrient management program, the state soil conservation committee, conservation grants, conservation operations, and program planning and development.

Find Maryland's Best from Your Own Computer www.marylandsbest.net

Maryland's Best works to connect consumers of all types with farmers. The website includes a searchable database that allows residents to find a variety of enterprises near them, from farmers markets to creameries to specific products.



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